

**Dennis Underwood Conservation Area
Land and Water Approval
Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Program
Final Program Decision Document 19-001**

Steering Committee Final Motion 19-001, October 24, 2018

The Steering Committee approves, by consensus, Reclamation entering into a permanent easement for conservation purposes with The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD) for \$9,730,000 to secure 635 acres of land and associated water rights for the Dennis Underwood Conservation Area, subject to completion of National Environmental Policy Act/California Environmental Quality Act Compliance and MWD Board approval.

(Moved by Chris Harris, seconded by Jon Sjoberg, and approved by consensus)

Final Program Decision Document 19-001

Benefits

- Cottonwood-willow and mesquite land cover will be created
- Located within the Palo Verde Irrigation District (priority one water rights)
- Site located adjacent to the Pretty Water Conservation Area and near Cibola Valley Conservation Area and Cibola NWR Unit#1.
- Expected to meet both the Habitat Conservation Plan and California Endangered Species Act requirements
- Completion of this easement, in addition to other established conservation areas in California, will secure acres needed to complete minimum created riparian habitat acres in California in perpetuity

Costs

- Easement covers 635 acres, including 575 water toll acres (WTac)
- A federal appraisal valued the property and associated water rights at \$9,730,000 (\$15,322/ac)
 - Appraisal valued the water toll acres at \$17,500/WTac
 - Comparable sales over the past 4 years ranged from \$14,824/WTac (2014 sale) to \$30,000/WTac (2017 sale)
 - Appraisal indicates a moderate increase in price over three years (14% - 30%); the market continues to trend upward
- Available WTac in Palo Verde Irrigation District are limited; the federal acquisition process puts Reclamation at a competitive disadvantage when attempting to secure acres for the program